

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----124649 152022Z /45

Z O 151830Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 7106
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV FLASH
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 1390

EXDIS TREAT AS NODIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IS, LE
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: GOL REQUEST FOR US INTERVENTION

1. MET WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS, PRIMIN HOSS AND FONMIN BOUTROS AT BAABDA AT 1800. REFERRING TO MY CONVERSATION WITH BOUTROS EARLIER IN DAY, SAID I HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH DEPARTMENT AND THAT WE ASKED THAT GOL NOT TAKE ANY STEPS TOWARDS REQUESTING SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING UNTIL WE HAD CHANCE EXAMINE WAYS TO DEAL WITH PROBLEM CREATED BY ISRAELI INCURSION. SAID ONE IDEA BEING DISCUSSED AT WORKING LEVEL WAS CREATION OF UNITED NATIONS FORCE WHICH WOULD TAKE OVER BUFFER ZONE ISRAELIS APPARENTLY PLANNING TO CREATE, THE UN FORCE TO BE RELIEVED OR AUGMENTED BY LEBANESE ARMY AS THAT ORGANIZATION BECAME ABLE RESUME SUCH RESPONSIBILITIES.

2. BOUTROS ASKED NUMBER OF QUESTIONS REGARDING MECHANICS WHICH I ANSWERED AS BEST I COULD WITH CAVEAT ALL WOULD DEPEND ON CONSULTATIONS WHICH NOW UNDER WAY IN WASHINGTON. BOUTROS

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AND SARKIS POINTED OUT THAT IDEA, AS THEY UNDERSTOOD IT, WOULD MERELY CREATE BUFFER ZONE WHICH WOULD KEEP PALESTINIANS AWAY FROM BORDER BUT WHICH WOULD DO NOTHING ABOUT ARMED PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN REST OF SOUTH LEBANON. IT WOULD PROTECT ISRAELIS BUT IT WOULD INCREASE DISCOMFITURE OF LEBANESE TO NORTH. I POINTED OUT THAT IF PALESTINIANS WERE NORTH OF LITANI, THEY WOULD BE IN AREA WHERE ARAB

DETERRENT FORCES COULD EXERCISE CONTROL OVER THEM. SARKIS EXPRESSED DOUBT SYRIANS WOULD IN FACT DO SO. HOSS SAID IF ISRAELIS MEANT WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT 7-10 KILOMETER BUFFER ZONE, THERE WOULD BE LARGE NO-MAN'S LAND BETWEEN THAT AND LITANI, IN WHICH THERE WOULD BE NO ADF PRESENCE. I ASKED IF THEY MEANT THEY WOULD LIKE THE ISRAELIS TO GO TO THE LITANI AND BOUTROS SAID THEY WERE NOT AT THAT STAGE YET.

3. AFTER MORE DISCUSSION, BOUTROS SAID HE WANTED MORE TIME TO THINK ABOUT THE MATTER AND TO DISCUSS IT IN PRIVATE WITH SARKIS AND HOSS. IN MEANTIME, DID HE UNDERSTAND MY PRESENTATION TO MEAN I DID NOT THINK ISRAELIS COULD BE FORCED TO WITHDRAW BY UNSC RESOLUTION OR BY AMERICAN EFFORTS UNLESS LEBANESE OR UNEF TOOK OVER BORDER ZONE? I SAID I DID NOT THINK ISRAELIS WOULD WITHDRAW UNDER UNSC RESOLUTION UNLESS AGREED ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE FOR SOME NON-PALESTINIAN FORCE TO TAKE OVER IN BORDER AREA. AS FOR OURSELVES, I HAD SAID THIS MORNING THAT WE WOULD TAKE SERIOUSLY ANY LEBANESE REQUEST AND WOULD MAKE SINCERE EFFORT, BUT IF THERE WAS NOT SOME ARRANGEMENT TO TAKE OVER BUFFER ZONE, I ANTICIPATED LONG AND DRAWN-OUT WRANGLE WITH ISRAELIS, RESULTS OF WHICH NOT CLEAR.

4. SARKIS THEN SAID THAT IN VIEW OF OUR VARIOUS MORAL AND OTHER COMMITMENTS TO LEBANON, HE WAS GOING TO ASK THAT WE INTERCEDE WITH THE ISRAELIS TO WITHDRAW,
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UNCONDITIONALLY. I ASKED IF HE WAS MAKING SUCH A REQUEST FORMALLY AT THAT POINT. HE SAID, YES, IT WAS A FORMAL REQUEST, WHICH HE WOULD FOLLOW UP IN WRITING WITH A LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER. I SAID I WOULD TRANSMIT THE REQUEST IMMEDIATELY.

5. WE AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT SARKIS WOULD NOT ANNOUNCE HE HAD MADE SUCH A REQUEST UNTIL SUCH TIME AS I HAD REPORTED THIS CONVERSATION TO WASHINGTON AND HAD RECEIVED DEPARTMENT'S REACTION, AS WELL AS RESULTS OF CONSULTATIONS NOW TAKING PLACE WITHIN USG.

6. COMMENT: WE HAVE ARRIVED AT NUB OF PROBLEM - WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE 5,000 - 10,000 ARMED PALESTINIANS WHOM ISRAELIS WILL PUSH OR FRIGHTEN NORTH OF BUFFER ZONE IF NOT NORTH OF LITANI. IF WE CAN FIND SOME WAY TO BRING THEM UNDER CONTROL, PERHAPS WITH HELP OF SYRIANS, BELIEVE LEBANESE WILL BUY UN FORCE PROPOSAL. OTHERWISE THEY ARE LIKELY SIMPLY TO PRESS FOR UNCONDITIONAL WITHDRAWAL AND LOOK TO US TO BRING IT ABOUT.

7. ALTERNATIVELY, PERHAPS ISRAELIS HAVE SOME IDEAS. THEY

TALK CONFIDENTLY OF NOT PERMITTING RETURN TO PRIOR SITUATION, AND MAY KNOW SOMETHING WE DON'T. OTHERWISE, WE ASSUME IT IS THEIR INTENTION TO REMAIN IN PLACE ALONG BORDER, INSIDE LEBANESE TERRITORY, PERHAPS RELYING ON CHRISTIAN FORCES TO AUGMENT THEIRS. THEY WOULD THUS AMALGAMATE THE CHRISTIAN VILLAGERS INTO TERRITORY UNDER THEIR CONTROL, AND WOULD IMPROVE SECURITY OF THE JEWISH VILLAGES IN NORTHERN ISRAEL, BUT THEY WOULD NOT GREATLY AFFECT PALESTINIAN ABILITY TO CARRY OUT RAIDS LIKE LAST SATURDAY'S. THEY WOULD ALSO INCREASE THE ALREADY DANGEROUS TENSIONS WITHIN LEBANON PROPER, AND THIS WILL SPILL OVER ON THEM SOONER OR LATER.

8. ABOVE DRAFTED PRIOR RECEIPT TEL AVIV 3530. WHILE
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WE UNDERSTAND ISRAELI DESIRE TO HAVE ASSURANCES MENTIONED BY WEIZMAN, WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT IS IN THE POWER OF GOL TO GIVE THEM. PERHAPS SOME ARRANGEMENT COULD BE WORKED OUT, BUT EXPERIENCE WITH SHTAWRA ACCORD DOES NOT GIVE MUCH CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM.
PARKER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTERVENTION, TROOP DEPLOYMENT, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT01390
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: EXDIS TREAT AS NODIS
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P850093-1877, N780003-0478
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780368/aaaacfbm.tel
Line Count: 142
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 42f96dc7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3329737
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOUTH LEBANON: GOL REQUEST FOR US INTERVENTION
TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, PBOR, IS, LE, US
To: STATE TEL AVIV MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/42f96dc7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014